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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003179

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SUBJECT: WANG JIN-PYNG CUTS OFF FROM NEW KMT CHAIR MA
YING-JEOU, FOCUSES ON 2008 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: TAIPEI 3058

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas H. Paal, Reason 1.4 b

1. (C) Summary. Following his crushing defeat by Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou in the July 16 KMT Chair election, embittered Legislative Yuan (LY) Speaker Wang Jin-pyng has cut contact and cooperation with Ma. Wang, however, still holds out hope that he can win the KMT 2008 presidential nomination. His strategy to effect this is to force party "outsider" Ma to run the party and organize the party's year-end local elections on his own, while Wang concentrates on running the LY and pursuing a "southern strategy" to shore up his base in southern Taiwan. If (when, in Wang's expectation) Ma founders, Wang will be there to pick up the pieces, inheriting both party leadership and presidential nomination. End Summary.

Not Over Till It's Over

2. (C) Chiang Min-chin, campaign manager and spokesperson for Wang Jin-pyng's KMT Chair campaign, acknowledged that Wang and his close supporters were shocked by the extent of Wang's election loss (28 percent to Ma's 72 percent, see reftel). Chiang told AIT that Wang nevertheless believes he still has a chance to achieve, by circuitous route, the party's 2008 presidential nomination. To this end, Chiang meets almost daily to devise a strategy for winning the 2008 KMT presidential nomination. This may be a long shot, Chiang acknowledged, but he is convinced it has a chance. Chiang, who studied political science at SUNY/Albany (Ph.D.), said that he modeled the plan that he proposed to Wang and Wang accepted, on President Nixon's experience -- 1960 presidential loss, 1962 California gubernatorial defeat, 1968 presidency.

3. (C) Under this plan to "reproduce Nixon", Wang will cut off completely from Ma and let Ma run the party and the Dec. 3 local elections on his own. (Chiang called this "sabotaging" Ma, apparently through non-cooperation.) Given that Ma has already publicly pledged that the KMT under his leadership will win a majority of the 23 county magistrate and city mayoral positions at stake in that election, failure to meet this goal could be viewed as a major set back for Ma and compromise his leadership of the party and his presidential prospects. Meanwhile, Wang will focus his attention on running the LY and reestablishing his support base in southern Taiwan. The objective of this strategy is to let Ma, the party "outsider" with few close advisors, self-destruct, leaving Wang to inherit both party leadership and the KMT nomination in 2008. This strategy, Chiang explained, will also entail extensive public relations work, Chiang said, to alter Wang's image as a corrupt party insider. When AIT pressed Chiang on what Wang would do if this strategy failed to win the 2008 KMT presidential nomination, Chiang said simply that Wang was practical (wushi) and would accept the vice presidential nomination and run with Ma as presidential candidate.

Familiar Strategy

4. (C) The Wang strategy described by Prof. Chiang is similar to one that he worked out for another political leader whom he advises -- Vice President Annette Lu (Hsiu-lien). Chiang told AIT in February that, in the face of strong competition from the dynamic and charismatic Premier Frank Hsieh and DPP Chair Su Tseng-chang, VP Lu had decided to lay low and bide her time in hopes that the "two kings" would (politically) kill each other off. Chiang noted to AIT the signs of growing tension and competition between Hsieh and Su in recent weeks. (Note: On July 25, VP Lu publicly stated that she will not take questions on running for the presidency.)

Comment: Last Man Standing

5. (C) The plan Prof. Chiang designed for Speaker Wang to attain the 2008 KMT presidential nomination is a long shot at

best and entirely dependent on Ma stumbling. The wild card in Wang's plan may be the current Chair, Lien Chan, and whether Lien pressures Wang to work with Ma for the sake of the party. DPP leaders are much more respectful of -- and worried about -- Mayor Ma's potential as KMT Chair than are Wang and Chiang. A China Times public opinion poll last week, moreover, shows Ma leading Su and Hsieh 47-19 and 44-20 percent, respectively. Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General James Huang told the Deputy Director on July 27 that he fully expects Ma to establish full control over the party in the near future and to employ the same kind of unorthodox "outsider" campaign strategy for the presidency that he did for the KMT Chair. While a Ma presidential candidate would almost certainly opt for a local Taiwanese (bendiren) as his Vice Presidential candidate, Huang rejected Wang as a possibility.

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